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Annual General Meeting 2020 - Rector's Report

It feels like a long time since my last report to an AGM. Of course, it has been longer than usual. We were gearing up for our AGM at the end of March when the COVID-19 restrictions hit, and we had to stop meeting. With an extension granted by the Archbishop, we then rescheduled our AGM for the end of July, hoping that the restrictions would have eased by then. However, the deterioration in the pandemic situation in recent weeks has rendered that impossible. So, we applied to the Archbishop, and were granted a brief extension of time to reschedule again for an online meeting, and here we are finally. Frustrating as the delays have been, one positive to come out of it is that members of KIC, who would not have been eligible to participate in the AGM before the end of March, are now able to join us.

A great deal has happened since the last AGM. On a personal level, I wasn't actually able to be at the AGM last year, as I was undergoing surgery on my shoulder and then had to take six weeks off work to recover. I want to thank John Thew for covering for me in not only running the AGM but taking care of the church in that time. This is not the first time he has helped out in this way. It's enormously comforting to know that in my absence the parish is in good hands.

Since the last AGM, the parish staff has grown. In my last AGM report, I expressed my delight that Lisa Delaney had joined us on staff. Her wealth of experience and training in children's ministry, and her passion for the Lord, have proved a godsend to us all. This year, I can also welcome Thayil John to the staff. Along with Megan Whittington in her role as administrator, we now have staff meetings of 4!

KIC joining us, and Thayil becoming part of our staff team, has been one of the most significant changes in the past year. In one sense, KIC being here is nothing new. KIC has been meeting in our buildings for all of its ten-year life. In fact, Thayil was here before me! And we at St John's have partnered with Figtree Anglican Church in supporting this ministry over all of that time. But, over the past couple of years, as Figtree Anglican Church reviewed its current and future ministries, the future of KIC came into question. That led to lengthy discussions between our two parishes and also Bishop Peter Hayward, which resulted in the decision for KIC to become a ministry of St John's, with Thayil being on staff here. I want to thank Ian Barnett and the wardens of Figtree, Peter Hayward, Thayil and the leadership of KIC, and the wardens and parish council of St John's, for their work, and for this positive outcome.

It is fair to say that we entered this arrangement with a degree of uncertainty. How would KIC survive, with the much more limited support that St John's could provide by comparison to Figtree? The reality has proven to be that KIC has not only survived, but flourished. Having begun the year with Thayil employed 2.5 days per week, I am delighted to say that recently the parish council approved increasing him to 5 days per week, such is the degree of financial support that the members and supporters of KIC have provided. Of course, finances are only one small part of the equation. I urge you to read Thayil's report, which outlines the various other ways in which KIC has grown this year. That includes appointing Jeffy Philip as a student intern. And I want to thank Jeffy for helping us run this meeting.

As I said, Thayil has written a report, which will be available on the members' section of the parish website, along with a report from Lisa Delaney. I encourage you to go to the website and not only find and read their reports, but all of the other material and information that is on there. If you don't have access to the members' area, please contact Megan Whittington.

As well as the staff, I want to thank all the volunteers that have worked in numerous areas of ministry over the past year: helping with children's ministry, using your musical gifts to enrich our gatherings, leading Bible studies, providing pastoral care, and so much more. The church is not the staff, it is the people. And I thank you for all you do.

The church is also not the building. Although it certainly helps to have buildings that enable rather than hinder our ministries! The wardens' report will say more about the progress of the facilities upgrade. This has been a long drawn out process, but we seem to be nearing the end – or the beginning of a new phase in our life. I want to thank Dennis Woodward in particular for all the work that he has put into this. It has been a great boon to have a man with such experience and knowledge of building as a warden.

The other thing that has had a significant impact on the church as well as our society more broadly has been the COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to quote a paragraph from my report to last year's AGM:

When it comes to making plans for the future, I am deeply aware that we don't know what tomorrow may bring (Proverbs 27:1; James 4:13-14), or which of our plans will succeed (Ecclesiastes 11:6). That doesn't mean that we shouldn't make plans, but rather that we should do so humbly, prayerfully asking God to guide us in the directions he wants us to go (Proverbs 3:5-6), trusting that although our plans may not prosper, the purpose of the Lord will stand (Proverbs 16:9; 19:21).

I had no way of knowing at that time what the future was about to bring us. In the past few months, we have had to learn how to operate in a whole new way in a much-changed world. I thank God for the technology we now have at our disposal that allows us to meet online, as we are doing for this meeting. Please pray for wisdom for me, the staff, the wardens, and the parish council as we continue to adapt to, and learn how to operate in, these challenging times. Please continue to pray for those whose lives have been devastated by this crisis. Please pray for our government and health care system. Please pray for a vaccine. And please keep yourselves safe and well.

I want to thank the outgoing wardens and parish council for their hard work and contributions to the life of the church over the past year. It is not always a glamorous job, dealing as they do with budgets and expenditure, maintenance, health and safety, and so on. However, without these things being dealt with we would all suffer. As I touched on before, it has been a particular boon to have people like Dennis Woodward and Steve Bessell on board who have knowledge and experience of building and engineering, as we work through the building planning process. Andrew Miller's medical expertise and advice has been invaluable in this pandemic. And Ian Whittington has brought both thoughtfulness and practical skills that have served us well. I particularly want to thank Andrew Stratford, my rector's warden, for his wisdom and support, and Gerrard for all that he contributes to the life of St John's. I pray and trust that God will grant us the right servants for the season that lies ahead.

As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12, we are all a part of the body. God, by his grace, has made us all different, and given us different roles. And it is only as each one plays their part, in harmony with the others, that the body stays healthy and grows. May God continue to help us to grow in the months and years ahead.



Rev. John Reed